

A COLORED CROESUS.

Remarkable Career of a Negro
Who Had Amassed a Fortune of
Two Million Dollars.

A striking evidence of the capacity of the Negro to acquire wealth by thrift and economy is found in the successful career of Colonel John McKee, who died a few days ago in Philadelphia.

He was one of the wealthiest colored men in Philadelphia, if not in the country. At one time he owned more than 1,000,000 acres of land, and his estate is said to be valued between \$1,500,000 and \$2,000,000.

Colonel McKee was born in 1821 at Alexandria, Va., and was indentured as a brickmaker when he was in his teens. He was of an adventurous temperament and ran away, but was brought back and compelled to finish his apprenticeship. At the age of 21 he reached Philadelphia, worked first in a livery stable, and afterwards at the restaurant of James Prosser. He married his employer's daughter, and later succeeded him in the business, conducting it until 1866.

He had been buying property from time to time, and on his retirement from the restaurant entered actively in the real estate business, buying and selling property for himself.

Colonel McKee owned at the time of his death from 300 to 400 houses, each of them unencumbered. He was the founder and owner of McKee City on the West Jersey Railroad, New Jersey, a tract of 4,500 acres divided into twenty-one farms. He also owned about 300,000 acres of coal and oil lands in Kentucky and in Logan county, W. Va.; a tract of twenty-one acres at Fifth street and Oregon avenue, Philadelphia; over 23,000 acres of land in Bath and Steuben counties, N. Y.; a farm of sixty-six acres at Croydon, on the Delaware river, besides many other properties in Pennsylvania and in other States.

Colonel McKee in 1870 organized and was colonel of the Thirteenth Regiment, N. G. P., in the Fifth Brigade, of which General Louis Wagner was brigadier general, and continued in the command for two years. Afterward he organized and was colonel of the Eighth New Jersey, another colored regiment.

There are surviving Colonel McKee a daughter, Mrs. A. A. P. Syphax, of Philadelphia, and six grandsons, who are Harry McKee Minton and Ernest F. and Theophilus M. McKee, of that city, and John and Douglass Syphax and Marcellus M. McKee, of Washington, D. C.

The deceased had many peculiarities, one of them being the distribution of gifts at Christmas to his tenants. Wagons with poultry stopped at each door the day before that festival, and each house renter was the recipient of his bounty. The children were remembered by toys and candies. The surplus was distributed to the children of his own neighborhood, and in the bestowal the policemen and firemen were always on hand to help the donor. He was taciturn and self-engrossed always, and his personal appearance marked the eccentric man, but gave no evidence of one with such vast riches. During the days of the colored militia he was liberal to the regiment over which he was lieutenant colonel, equipping the rifle and drum corps and contributing in other ways to its success.

An editorial elsewhere discusses further incidents bearing upon this remarkable character.

A Negro Playwright.

Those who enjoyed the several dramatic productions last year under the direction of Mr. W. Henry Thomas, will be glad to know that this talented young actor and playwright has returned to the city. During his absence he and his company scored flattering successes in New York and New Jersey. The troupe bears the title of the Thomas Imperial Dramatic Company. While only a year old, to its entertainments here last fall large audiences were attracted, which filled such representative churches as John Wesley A. M. E. Zion church, Shiloh Baptist, Bethlehem Baptist and others, besides halls in the city and Anacostia. Mr. Thomas had been preparing to produce a big melodrama here at one of the theatres about the latter part of April, but death in his family has

made a delay necessary. He will spend some time in Washington, but expects to reside in New York next year.

Gay Season at Annapolis

Annapolis, Md., Special:—As if to forget the sad days of the penitential season society has now rushed into gayety heretofore unknown,—weddings, dances, receptions, teas and innumerable pleasures. One of the prettiest weddings of the season was that of Miss Hattie Mayme Reed, daughter of Mrs. Sidonia Reed Johnson, to Mr. Thomas Edward Baden on Monday evening, March 31st, at St. Phillips P. E. church. The church was beautifully decorated with potted palms and flowers. The bride, who who was beautifully attired in organdie, with chiffon and pearl trimming, carried lilies of the valley. She entered the church to the strains of Mendelssohn's wedding march with her brother-in-law, Mr. Benjamin Phillips, preceded by two ushers, Messrs John T. Stepney and Mr. J. Albert Little, and two bridesmaids, Misses Lizzie Wells and Annie King who wore pink organdie, and Miss Irene Stewart as made of honor, who wore white organdie. The bride was met at the altar by the groom and his best man, Mr. John H. King, jr. The ceremony was performed by Rev. J. Simons, priest in charge. Immediately after the ceremony a reception was given at the residence of the bride's mother, West st. An immense throng witnessed the ceremony. The reception was a magnificent and the presents were numerous and costly.

The Lu quise Circle gave their semi-annual reception on Tuesday, April 1st at the Assembly Rooms, Gloucester street. It was a decided success, the music was entrancing and the guests did justice to the occasion. Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Abrams arrived here to spend the first days of their honeymoon at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. E. Fletcher of Murray Hill. Quite a number of friends attended the reception. The parlor was elaborately decorated. The menu was fit for an empire. Several selections were rendered by Mr. Thomas Baden. On Thursday evening, April 3rd, Mrs. Johns of Germantown gave an "At Home" in honor of Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Abrams. The supper consisted of salads, ices, cake and wine. Dancing was indulged in by the younger set. Many out of town guests were present. Friday evening the residence of Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Bates was a scene of beauty, the occasion being a tea in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Abrams. The dominant color was red.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Richardson gave a dinner on Sunday evening, April 6th at their residence, 17 South street, in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Baden. The table was spread for ten.

Prof. Kealing at Nashville.

Mr. Kealing, editor of the A. M. E. Review, Philadelphia, Pa., delivered the lectures this year before the Inter-Collegiate Lecture Bureau of Nashville, Tenn., April 18 1902. Mr. Kealing's subject was "The Increments of Civilization." The lecture bureau has been maintained successfully for thirteen years by Walden University, and Roger Williams University, and has had such speakers as Hon. John M. Langston, Hon. Frederick Douglass, Revs. Wm. A. Credit, J. W. E. Bowen, M. C. B. Mason and C. S. Smith. Prof. Kealing is a scholar and an orator, and his lecture was equal to the demands of the occasion.

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